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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 6824
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2376
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RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 8236
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 4231
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 2799
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 005099

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: PAKISTAN UPDATE: WEEK OF NOVEMBER 26

Ref: None

Classified By: Polcouns Candace Putnam, for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (C) Summary: Sporadic protests by lawyers, journalists and students continued around the country the week of November 26, and opposition political party leaders continued to debate whether to boycott the January 8 elections. In the wake of Pervez Musharraf's retirement as Chief of Army Staff, his second-term inauguration as President, and his announcement that the State of Emergency (SOE) and Provisional Constitutional Order would end on December 16, most politicians are busy filing their candidate nomination papers. The Ministry of Interior announced that only 37 people detained under the SOE remained in detention. The United Arab Emirates lifted the block on transmission of Geo TV from Dubai, but Geo is not yet back on cable TV in Pakistan. With Codel Bennett, Ambassador raised the ongoing visa problems of IRI and The Asia Foundation with President Musharraf and Foreign Minister Haq.. End summary.

Protests Continue

¶12. (U) On November 29, police baton-charged rock-throwing lawyers protesting in Lahore; the GOP denied tear gassing the group and reported that lawyers who had been detained in the protest had been released. On November 28, lawyers and journalists held a small, joint demonstration at the Peshawar High Court to protest the sacking of the judiciary and media restrictions. Although the protest was dispersed peacefully, the lawyers vowed to continue their demonstrations until the state of emergency is lifted. In addition, many of the student wings of the Peshawar political parties, including the Pakhtun Students Federation, the Peoples Student Federation, the Muslim League Students Federation, and Islami Jamiat Talaba (JTI), are planning to organize small protests over the coming days.

¶13. (U) The lawyers of Rawalpindi, Attock, and Taxila observed November 29 as a Black Day to protest Musharraf's inauguration under the 1973 Constitution. The same day, the Lahore Bar Association held a rally as it also observed a Black Day against Musharraf's inauguration. In Karachi and Balochistan, the lawyers continue to hold daily one-hour strikes.

To Boycott or Not to Boycott

¶4. (U) The All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM) held meetings in Lahore that continued through November 30 to consider whether to boycott the January elections. To date, the APDM does not have a firm boycott policy despite multiple press announcements by its members. At a press conference in Peshawar on November 30, Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) announced it would boycott both the provincial and national elections in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). The Pakistan Tehreek Insaaf (PTI), led by Imran Khan also announced an intention to boycott the elections. The Awami National Party (ANP) and Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), however, said they would not boycott. Nawaz Sharif, leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N party, indicated publicly that his party would boycott but it is not clear if it actually will not participate in elections.

¶5. Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) indicated in press statements that her party would take part in the upcoming elections but under protest and with the right to boycott as the election approaches.

¶6. Meanwhile, the Election Commission reported that it has received 13,490 nomination papers for a total of 265 National Assembly and 566 provincial assembly seats.

Arrests/Detentions

¶7. (U) The Ministry of Interior (MOI) announced on November 27 that during the first few weeks of the state of emergency, approximately 5,750 individuals were arrested but only 37 currently remained behind bars. Of those still imprisoned, five are detained under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO)

Ordinance and the remaining prisoners are charged with acts of violence. The five currently detained under the MPO include the current Supreme Court Bar Association President Aitzaz Ahsan, Justice (ret.) Tariq Mehmood, and three other lawyers. According to media reports, the members of the deposed Supreme Court, who have been under house arrest in the Islamabad judges' enclave since November 3, were ordered to be forcibly removed from their government homes.

Media

¶8. (U) On November 29, the media authorities in Dubai announced that they will once again allow Geo TV to resume its broadcast from Dubai. However, the GOP has not yet restored Geo's access to cable TV inside Pakistan. In support of the channel, several small-scale demonstrations took place around Pakistan, including marches from the Lahore Press Club to the Geo office by lawyers and civil society organizations on November 27 and a similar march conducted by approximately 100 university students on November 28.

IRI/TAF

¶9. (U) With visiting Codel Bennett, Ambassador raised with President Musharraf and FM Haq our concern that the International Republican Institute (IRI) continues to receive GOP letters advising them to leave the country. Ambassador also raised our concern that the local director of The Asia Foundation (TAF) has had his visa canceled. Both IRI and TAF are implementing USAID- and DRL-funded election and democracy projects in Pakistan. Both the President and the Minister promised to try and resolve these problems.

¶10. (C) Comment: In the wake of Pervez Musharraf's retirement as Chief of Army Staff, his second-term inauguration as President, and his announcement that the State of Emergency and Provisional Constitutional Order would end on December 16, most politicians are busy filing their candidate nomination papers. Although protests continue, the

media is turning its attention to the cycle of vote swapping and political coalition building that is the norm for election season in Pakistan. We believe that most detainees have indeed been released but expect the MOI to vigorously enforce the Election Commission's code of conduct (septel) that limits large political rallies for security reasons.

PATTERSON